

BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

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**Providence Public Library**  
**150 Empire St.**  
**Providence, RI 02908**  
**Thursday, July 1, 2010 4:00 p.m.**  
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MINUTES

Attending: R. Flanders, K. Forbes, A. Beretta, B. Shimberg, C. Callahan,
A. Cano-Morales, F. Caprio.

The meeting convened at 4:05 p.m.

Commissioner's Report

Adult Education Update – Commissioner Gist told the Board that the overall goal of adult education is to ensure all Rhode Island adults have the skills and credentials they need for upward mobility (college and career), engaged citizenship, and leading strong families and communities. Located in public libraries across the state, the Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative began more than 12 years ago, offering programming to address the literacy needs and barriers of children and their families. As a high-performing adult-education provider, RIFLI has adjusted to the needs in the community and now offers ESL, citizenship, and college/career transition programming. It is a leader in the use of technology to support adult learning and it is Rhode Island's representative for the National Learner Web project. Strong adult-education programs such as RIFLI will be necessary as the next set of adult-education reforms is instituted. These will include alignment of adult secondary and postsecondary education policies that adhere to the nationally benchmarked college- and career-readiness standards as well as expansion of adult education that is contextualized and supports career pathways for youth and adults in Rhode Island critical and emerging sectors.

RTTT Update – The Commissioner told the group that we should receive news on Rhode Island's Race to the Top application by the second or third week of July and that interviews will be scheduled during the second week of August.

Graduation Requirements – The 2008 Board of Regents High School Regulations say that: "Commencing with the graduating class of 2012, local educational agencies without full approval will no longer be authorized to grant diplomas; all diplomas granted within the State of Rhode Island's public schools must then be Regents' approved diplomas." Under these regulations, approximately 3,000 – 4,500 students may be denied local diplomas. The Commissioner told the group that she would like to create a Board of Regents subcommittee to develop a solution that will, first of all, mitigate the student impact in 2012, and, second, will compel continued efforts of implementation and maintain BOR authority. She explained that there are a number of options available to mitigate the implications of the 2008 Regulations, and she urged the Board to form an ad hoc committee to fully examine all of the options. Chairman Flanders asked that Regent Callahan chair the committee, as an extension of her original work on the High School Regulations.

Summer Program Update – The Commissioner reported that, on Wednesday, she had visited some summer-learning sites with a group of middle-school students who participate in YMCA programs. They visited the Joslin Recreation Center: YMCA on the Move; Roger Williams Park Zoo; the Pawtucket Library: Teen Zone; RISD Museum of Art; and the Jaswell's Farm: Farm to School Program. They also enjoyed lunch at the Galego Court Community, one of the summer food-service programs funded through the USDA and administered by the Department of Education to provide free, nutritious meals for children in schools, parks, playgrounds, and other sites across the state. Commissioner Gist

emphasized that there are a lot of learning opportunities across Rhode Island where, at little or no cost, families and students can have fun and learn this summer.

One-year anniversary –Commissioner Gist remarked that this week marks the end of the first year of her Commissionership. She thanked the Regents for the opportunity to come to Rhode Island and thanked Rhode Island for welcoming her.

Public Remarks

Karisa Tashjian, Rhode Island Family Literacy program, thanked the Regents for holding the meeting at the Providence Public Library and the Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative Center. She said that 15 adult immigrants attend the program, where they have been studying ESL and career awareness twice a week over the past year. Additionally RIFLI ESL and citizenship-preparation programs are held in the Cranston, East Providence, Pawtucket, Providence, and West Warwick libraries.

Zoila Sanchez, RIFL, spoke to the Regents about her participation in the center's ESL program. She said that education is very important to her, and she is grateful for the opportunity to learn English.

Melisa Pimentel, RIFL, told the members of the Board that she had come to the United States one year ago and had to wait four months to get into the RIFL program. She said that her primary goal is to learn English so that she will be able to attend college; however, at the center she has access to a lot of other services as well.

Carolyn Sheehan, Director, Blackstone Academy Charter School and Vice President of the League of Charter Schools - Ms. Sheehan thanked the Department for its work with the charter schools that are up for renewal and/or extension of their charters on tonight's agenda. She also told the Regents that, while she recognizes the importance of developing and adopting performance standards, she is concerned that tonight's vote is premature. She urged the Regents to delay the vote until the standards are developed so that everyone knows what the criteria for performance is. She also asked that the charter schools be included in that developmental work.

Rose Mary Grant, Principal Highlander Charter School, urged the Regents to give the Highlander Charter School a five -year renewal.

Jim Gannaury, Highlander Board member and foster grandparent, thanked the Regents for reconsidering the original proposal to grant Highlander a one-year renewal. He said that he understands the Commissioner's goal to ensure that Rhode Island charter schools are the best schools (academically) in the state however, he expressed his concern that, by the state relying solely on state testing, some kids will be excluded from having the opportunity to have a choice in the school they attend.

Stephen Panikoff, Director Kingston Hill Academy, expressed his agreement that the state goal should be to increase student achievement and graduation rates; however, he disagrees with the time frame of the establishment of performance criteria.

Julie Nora, Director, International Charter Schools, disagrees with the "order of things." She said that it is premature to vote on the renewal or extension of any charters until the performance criteria are developed. Additionally, the school was looking forward to celebrating the granting of a five -year charter rather than a two.

William Shuey, International Charter School, spoke to the Regents about the physical facility. He said that for bonding purposes, the stability of a school is important and a five-year charter is more stable than a two-year charter.

David Bourne, Cuffee Charter School, announced that he is retiring from Cuffee this year and introduced the new head of school, Michael Obel-Omia. He told the Regents that he supports the development of performance criteria to hold charter schools accountable, but asks that the Regents put the criteria in place before voting on any extensions or reauthorizations.

Heiry Borrell and Jennifer Rodriguez, Young Voices, urged the Regents not to rely solely on test scores when reauthorizing charter schools; rather, they should look at climate and culture, as well. Additionally, the Regents need to put policies in place for ALL schools – not just charter schools – to protect choices for families.

Mena Perreira, Young Voices: told the members of the Board that a “concrete” process of evaluation and performance criteria needs to be put in place before any extensions are granted.

Stephen Day, parent of a former Highlander student (now in college), talked about his daughter’s experience at Highlander. He told the group that she never would have “made it” to college if it hadn’t been for Highlander.

Travis Zellner, Rhode Island School for the Deaf, spoke on the agenda item to return the authority of the Rhode Island School for the Deaf to the Board of Trustees. He told the Regents that the Trustees have been working hard to find good trustees to fill the two vacant seats. The Board is committed to bringing the school back to where it should be.

Steve Florio, Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, requested that the Regents take this opportunity to establish a common structure with the School for the Deaf Trustees by scheduling joint meetings twice a year. He suggested April and October.

John Wolfe, Highlander teacher, spoke about the huge challenges at Highlander and the need for the Regents to “do the right thing.” He urged the Regents to fix the failures of the system, but not based solely on test scores. He asked that the Regents vote to give Highlander a five-year reauthorization.

Approval of Executive Minutes of the Board of Regents Meeting of May, 5, 2010; Minutes of the Board of Regents Special Work Session on Charter Schools of June 1, 2010; Minutes of the Board of Regents Meeting of June 3, 2010; Minutes of Board of Regents Work Session on the Evaluation of the Commissioner of June 11, 2010; Executive Minutes of Board of Regents Work Session on the Evaluation of the Commissioner of June 11, 2010; Minutes of Board of Regents Work Session of June 17, 2010; and the Minutes of the Board of Regents Special Work Session on Highlander Charter School of June 22, 2010.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approves the Executive Minutes of the Board of Regents Meeting of May, 5, 2010; Minutes of the Board of Regents Special Work Session on Charter Schools of June 1, 2010; Minutes of the Board of Regents Meeting of June 3, 2010; Minutes of Board of Regents Work Session on the Evaluation of the Commissioner of June 11, 2010; Executive Minutes of Board of Regents Work Session on the Evaluation of the Commissioner of June 11, 2010; Minutes of Board of Regents Work Session of June 17, 2010; and the Minutes of the Board of Regents Special Work Session on Highlander Charter School of June 22, 2010.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval to Return the Authority of the School for the Deaf to the Board of Trustees

Commissioner Gist reminded the Board that this agenda item was discussed at their June 17 work session. She then reviewed the history of the action: in October 2009, the Board of Regents passed a resolution to exercise its authority related to the supervision, administration, and control of the School for the Deaf and its operation by assigning the direct supervision of the current school director and assistants to the RIDE Office for Diverse Learners director. She asked that the Regents now return the authority of the School for the Deaf to the Board of Trustees. RIDE staff member Ken Swanson updated the group on the progress of filling the last two seats on the Board of Trustees.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Approve the Return of Authority of the School for the Deaf to the Rhode Island School for the Deaf Board of Trustees.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Appeals

Regent Amy Beretta presented each of these appeals and read the decisions, as follows:

Student M. Doe v. Bristol Warren School Department

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, in the Matter of Student M. Doe v. the Bristol Warren School Department, the Decision of the Commissioner is Upheld.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Jean Campbell v. Cranston School Committee

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, in the Matter of Jean Campbell v. Cranston School Committee, the Decision of the Commissioner is Upheld.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Gabrielle Hart v. Newport School Committee

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, in the Matter of Gabrielle Hart v. Newport School Committee, the Decision of the Commissioner is Upheld.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Bernard McCrink v. Providence School Board

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, in the Matter of Bernard McCrink v. Providence School Board, the Decision of the Commissioner is Upheld.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Paul Perrino v. Providence School Board

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, in the Matter of Paul Perrino v. Providence School Board, the Decision of the Commissioner is Upheld.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Cranston School District & Chariho Regional School District v. RIDE

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, in the Matter of the Cranston School District & Chariho Regional School District v. RIDE, the Decision of the Commissioner is Upheld.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Extension of Charter for Highlander Charter School

Ms. Gist made opening remarks on the proposal to extend the Highlander Charter School charter for three years and to include a performance-management plan that sets expectations and student-achievement benchmarks for each academic year 2010 through 2013. For the record, Ms. Gist emphasized that at no time did she ever suggest that Highlander not be reauthorized at all. Rather, she said that she had concerns about its test scores and was asking for an opportunity for the Department and Regents to take a closer look. The Commissioner then invited Jennifer Smith to come to the table to update the group

on the process. Ms. Smith talked about the vision for charter public schools and the establishment of clear and concise measurable objectives. The group then talked about timeline (a draft of the performance measures will be ready in the fall) and the development process (which will include a review of what other states are doing and input from Rhode Island charter public schools).

Regent Caprio addressed the group, saying that this recommendation represents a compromise for both the Regents/Department and the Highlander Charter School. He urged passage of the motion.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Grants a three-year extension of the charter for Highlander Charter School. This extension will include a performance-management plan that sets expectations and student-achievement benchmarks for each academic year 2010 through 2013. Highlander Charter School's performance will be reviewed each school year. Following the review in 2013, if requirements of the performance-management plan have been met, an additional extension of the charter (five years) shall be considered.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of Extension of Charters for Paul Cuffee, Kingston Hill, and International Charter Schools

The Commissioner told the Regents that this agenda item is being presented to them for approval to ensure that there is clarity on the expectations for the reauthorization of charter public schools. All of these schools are up for reauthorization next summer. The Regents discussed the possibility of holding off this vote until after the performance agreements have been developed.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Grants a two-year extension of the charters for Paul Cuffee, Kingston Hill, and International Charter Schools. This extension will include a performance-management plan that sets expectations and student achievement benchmarks for each academic year 2010 through 2013. Each school's performance will be reviewed annually. Following the review in 2013, if the achievement benchmarks articulated within the performance-management plan have been achieved, an additional extension of the charter (five years) shall be considered.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Approval of the Common Core

Commissioner Gist reminded the Regents that during the two work sessions held on June 17 and 24, RIDE staff presented information on the Common core standards, as follows:

- The Common Core State Standards were developed as a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association and Council of Chief State School Officers. 48 states, 2 territories, and the District of Columbia are part of this state led consortium.
- These standards were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and education experts. They are aligned with college and work expectations and internationally benchmarked.
- After reviewing the final version of the standards, RIDE is confident that these standards maintain the high expectations that have been set for our students through the GLEs and GSEs.

- RIDE is developing a detailed implementation plan to ensure that all schools are fully implementing a curriculum that is aligned with the Common Core standards prior to the first assessment based on the Common Core standards, during the 2014-15 school year.

MOVED AND SECONDED: THAT, the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education Adopt the Common Core State Standards, as presented.

VOTE: Approved Unanimously.

Agenda for Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Board of Regents will be a work session and is scheduled on July 22, 2010, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., in the Shepard Building, Room 501. Additional information about the agenda is available in the Office of the Commissioner of Education, Shepard Building, 255 Westminster Street, Providence, RI 02903. The Shepard Building has been deemed accessible to those with disabilities by the State Building Commissioner. Individuals requesting interpreter services for the hearing impaired or needing other accommodations, please call 401-222-8468 or RI Relay 1-800-745-5555 at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.

With unanimous consent, the meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.